DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 192 409 CS 503 046

AUTHOR Ishii, Satoshi; And Others
TITLE A Comparison of Communication Styles of Japanese and American College Students.
PUB DATE 80
NOTE 8p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Japan Association of Current English (Tochigi-Ken, Japan, October 25, 1980).

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Adults; *Behavior Patterns; College Students; *Communication (Thought Transfer); *Communication Research; Comparative Analysis; *Cross Cultural Studies; *Cultural Differences; Foreign Countries; Higher Education; Research; Self Evaluation (Individuals); *Speech Communication
IDENTIFIERS *Japan; United States

ABSTRACT

The Communicator Style Measure (CSM) was administered to 731 students in Japanese universities and 520 American students at the University of Hawaii to discover if members of certain ethnic or national groups possessed a style of speaking that distinguished them from members of other groups. The CSM contains 51 randomly ordered items that inquire of subjects if a particular communicative behavior is descriptive of how they perceive their style. The nine behaviors gauged as independent variables are (1) dominant, (2) attentive, (3) friendly, (4) relaxed, (5) contentious, (6) dramatic, (7) animated, (8) open, and (9) impression-leaving. The one dependent variable measured is communicator image. The student responses were analyzed using a procedure for comparing independent samples of unequal size. The results showed that the American and Japanese students were significantly different on all variables except dominance and friendliness. Specifically, the Americans perceived themselves as more attentive, contentious, animated, and impression-leaving than the Japanese and had a stronger image of themselves as communicators. The Japanese saw themselves as more relaxed, dramatic, and open than the Americans. (FL)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Donald Klopf

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

ED192409

A COMPARISON OF COMMUNICATION STYLES OF JAPANESE AND AMERICAN COLLEGE STUDENTS

by Satoshi Ishii, Ronald Cambra and Donald Klopf*

(Prepared for the 1980 Annual Convention of the Japan Association of Current English.)

As a person speaks, two types of behavior act simultaneously. One behavior refers to what is said and that behavior is the message and its content. The other behavior refers to how what is said is actually said, and that behavior is the way the message is presented. That second behavior is the means or vehicle of communication and it includes such speaking cues and tendencies as posture, gesture, facial expression, voice inflection, the sequence of ideas and the rhythm of speech. These cues and tendencies constitute the person's style of speaking and that subject is the concern of this paper.

Every person has a particular style of speaking which is his instinctive manner of orally expressing his thoughts. A person's style reflects his own individual variation of the cues and tendencies which make up speaking style in general. By virtue of frequency, his style becomes an instinctive part of his communicative behavior and through it, close acquaintances can identify him. Among our acquaintances, we probably can name persons who represent all sorts of speaking styles. For instance, there quite likely will be persons who are friendly, open and attentive; others who are shy, uptight, and jittery; some who are confident, dominant and relaxed, among other possibilities.

Research has been completed which sets forth a method of determining an individual's speaking style. Through this method, the characteristics of a person's style are identified (Norton, 1978), making it comparatively easy to classify individuals according to a particular style. We wondered if groups of people could be similarily classified. Do the members of certain ethnic, national or social groups possess a style of speaking which distinguishes them from the members of other groups? Knowing that people belong to a certain group, could we expect those people to practice a particular style?

In an attempt to discover whether groups, generally speaking, do have distinctive styles, we undertook a comparative research project on style utilizing a number of groups (Bruneau, Ishii, Cambra and Klopf, 1980) and here we report the findings of part of that research, specifically, that relating to the speaking styles of Japanese and American college students.

Method

The Communicator Style Measure (CSM: Norton, 1978) was completed by 737 Japanese students from Chou, Meiji, Nihon and Otsuma Women's universities and

CS503046

---

* Ishii is Assistant Professor, Otsuma Women's University, Tokyo; Cambra is Assistant Professor and Klopf is Professor, University of Hawaii, Honolulu, Hawaii.

520 Americans from the University of Hawaii's several campuses. In the Japanese group, there were 434 males and 297 females in the age range 18 to 24 years of age, representing all classes of students. The American group consisted of 280 males and 250 females in the same age range and classes as the Japanese. Each group included students majoring in subject areas from the arts, sciences, business, engineering and nursing.

The CSM was initially developed by Mortensen (1972) and Mortensen, Norton and Arntson (1972). The measure was refined by Norton (1974) and Norton and Miller (1975). It appears in several versions and the fifty-one item version reported by Norton (1978) was used in this study.

The fifty-one items are randomly ordered and inquire of a subject if a particular communicative behavior is descriptive of how he perceives his style. A five-point scale is provided for each item and the subject responds by checking the point on each scale most representative of his perception of his behavior.

The following are examples of the content of the fifty-one items:

1. In most social situations I generally speak very frequently.

2. My speech tends to be very picturesque.

3. I am very argumentative.

4. I tend to constantly gesture when I communicate.

5. What I say leaves an impression on people.

Nine independent variables and one dependent variable (communicator image) are embedded in the CSM. Five items define each independent variable and six the dependent one. These are summed to obtain an index score for each variable. The variables are listed next along with an explanation of each as provided by Norton and Pettegrew (1977):

1. Dominant. This attribute refers to the tendency to come on strong in most social situations. A person who takes charge of things when with others is dominant; a person who generally speaks very frequently in social situations is dominant.

2. Friendly. This attribute refers to a person who usually demonstrates kindly interest and goodwill toward others. This person is seldom hostile towards others and is usually regarded with high esteem by others.

3. Attentive. This attribute refers to how alert a person is as a communicator. An attentive communicator tends to be encouraging to others, listening carefully to what they have to say. Such a person deliberately reacts in such a way that people know that they are being listened to.

4. Relaxed. This attribute refers to how much at ease a communicator appears to be. A person who is not conscious of any nervous mannerisms in his speech is relaxed; a person who is calm and collected when talking is relaxed; a person whose rhythm or flow of speech is not affected by nervousness is relaxed.

5. Contentious. This attribute refers to a person who constantly quarrels and disputes with others. Such a person may be thought of as belligerent and the cause of much interpersonal unrest.

6. Dramatic. This attribute refers to how verbally alive a person is. A person whose speech tends to be very picturesque is dramatic; a person who frequently exaggerates to emphasize a point is dramatic; a person who vocally acts out what is being communicated is dramatic.

7. Animated. This attribute refers to how nonverbally active a person is as a communicator. A person who actively uses facial expressions and physical gestures is animated. A person whose eyes tend to reflect a great deal of what they are feeling is animated.

8. Open. This attribute refers to how self-disclosing a person is as a communicator. A person who readily reveals personal things or openly expresses feelings and emotions is an open communicator; when other people generally know the person's emotional state even if the person does not say anything; the person is open.

9. Impression-Leaving. This attribute refers to how affecting a person is as a communicator. What this person says as well as how he says it often leaves an impression. If people react to this person when they first meet and tend to remember him, this person is impression-leaving.

10. Communicator Image. This attribute refers to how good a communicator a person is. If a person finds it easy to talk on a one-to-one basis or in small groups with strangers, he has a good communicator image. A person who finds it easy to maintain a conversation with a member of the opposite sex has a good communicator image.

After the CSM was administered and scored, the Japanese and American results were analyzed using the Tuccy t-test (Nie, Hull, Jenkins, Steinbrenner and Bent, 1975), a procedure for comparing independent samples of unequal size.

Results

Table 1 presents the comparison between the Japanese and Americans. The means, standard deviations and t-test comparisons on the ten variables are shown and the comparisons reveal that the Japanese and Americans were significantly different on all variables except the dominant and friendly one.

Specifically, the Americans perceive themselves to be more attentive, contentious, animated, and impression-leaving than the Japanese and have a stronger image of themselves as communicators. On the other hand, the Japanese see themselves as more relaxed, dramatic, and open than the Americans.

However, neither the Japanese nor the Americans compare well with the other national groups studied (Bruneau, Ishii, Cambra and Klopf, 1980). When compared to the Chinese, Koreans and Micronesians as well as the Americans, the Japanese rank last on all fifty-one items except two, suggesting that they do not have a favorable image of themselves as oral communicators. On the two exceptions, they rank first on the open variable and second on the relaxed one. Thus,

TABLE 1.

CSM COMPARISONS BETWEEN JAPANESE AND AMERICAN STUDENTS

CHARACTERISTIC	JAPAN MEAN***	JAPAN STANDARD DEVIATION	AMERICA MEAN	AMERICA STANDARD DEVIATION	t COMPARISON
Dominant	16.47	3.01	16.35	3.15	NSF
Friendly	13.93	2.43	13.70	2.22	NSF
Attentive	15.17	2.45	14.24	2.25	6.92*
Relaxed	15.59	2.78	17.31	2.72	10.96*
Contentious	16.22	2.96	15.16	3.14	6.13*
Dramatic	14.97	3.00	15.47	2.81	2.99**
Animated	15.40	2.81	13.83	2.80	9.77*
Open	14.54	3.03	15.53	3.23	5.59*
Impression-Leaving	15.53	2.55	14.12	2.32	10.13*
Communicator Image	20.62	3.64	17.79	3.14	14.38*

*$p < .01$ **$p < .05$

***The lower the mean score, the more like the variable.

though they feel they are not good communicators, at least they think they are open and relaxed when talking to others.

When compared to the other national groups, the Americans consistently fall in the middle ranks on the fifty-one items except on the relaxed one (Bruneau, Ishii, Cambra and Klopf, 1980). On that item they rank last. Thus, the Americans do not believe they are outstanding speakers and, on the basis of the relaxed variable, tend to feel that they are shy about speaking to other people.

Discussion

The findings support, in the main, previous research on the speaking practices of the Japanese and the Americans as represented by students in Hawaii.

The Japanese rate themselves most strongly on the open variable. They

believe they are honest, sincere and authentic in their oral interactions--all qualities of socially desirable behavior. Yet they rank last on the friendly attentive, contentious, animated, impression-leaving and communicator image variables--a ranking which implies that they do not hold a positive attitude toward their speaking effectiveness. In Japan, there are many sayings describing the importance of silence and disadvantages of speaking. However, there are few words praising good oral behavior. People have been taught that speaking is disadvantageous in getting along in society and the typical Japanese tries to avoid speaking out, especially in a formal setting (Okuda, 1975).

Cambra, Ishii and Klopf (1980) reviewed the speaking practices of the Japanese and, on the basis of extensive research, concluded that most Japanese perceive themselves to be highly apprehensive in oral communication encounters and have a low inclination to talk, especially to strangers but to friends as well, relying more on their nonverbal behavior to communicate their feelings. They also found that the typical Japanese has a low to moderate need to maintain interpersonal relationships, probably because the average Japanese has strong in-group affiliations that command his time and interest. Additionally, they discovered that the typical Japanese will not dominate in an interpersonal encounter nor initiate and maintain a conversation for long. Outwardly shy, the Japanese exhibit reluctance to verbalize orally and to interact with people who do not belong to the groups with which they associate. When they do speak, however, they tend to be self-describing, calm and collected.

The Americans taking part in this study perceive themselves to be more apprehensive and poorer speakers than do Americans in general. Klopf and Cambra (1979) affirm this conclusion and supply reasons for it. A principal reason relates to the ethnic constituency of the population. The Hawaii group was 62 percent Japanese-American, and in Hawaii the Japanese-Americans exhibit some cultural qualities similar to those in Japan, including reluctance to verbalize orally.

The use of "pidgin" or Island dialect is another important influence. Pidgin evolved in the nineteenth century to help the multiple ethnic groups communicate with one another. In the twentieth century, it was considered substandard speech, and attempts were made to eradicate pidgin in the schools. Caught between peer-group and parental uses of pidgin and the school pressures to eliminate it, many children developed apprehension about talking. They fail to develop good images of themselves as speakers.

Caveats are in order about the results. The first of these relate to the CSM. Like other psychometric instruments, the CSM is contingent about context, situation and time. People usually communicate differently in different contexts. For example, a person's speaking style probably will vary if that person is in a therapeutic, academic, religious, business or political context. Likewise, style will vary if the situation is loving, hating, playing, selling, lying, persuading, instructing, asserting, and so on. And, the time of day or the time of life may be a factor. More relaxed earlier in the day, a person, for instance, may be less contentious than he might be after a hard day's work. And, as a person gets older, his communication style is likely to change (Norton and Pettegrew, 1977).

The CSM's validity is not complete at this time, Norton (1978) claims,

and judging the results of the variables, especially the friendly one, should be done with caution, he writes. Moreover, the CSM apparently provides the most reliable data when it is employed by a neutral observer who uses it to predict the communication styles of those he observes.

Second, this research probably presents methodological problems and these need to be considered when interpreting the results. Such a problem could exist in the language of the CSM. Whether the CSM is linguistically and conceptually equivalent to each group is not known. It is plausible that an unknown portion of the results are attributable to variations in meaning the CSM might carry among the Chinese, Japanese and Koreans and even among the Americans represented by the multiethnic Guamanians and Hawaiians. Other methodological problems range from the difficulty of comparing people with different homogeneous backgrounds to the variations in the groups' size.

In view of these caveats, further research is necessary to insure that the problems enumerated here have not contaminated the results. In spite of the fact that the results are supported to a large extent by other research, caution should be employed in generalizing about the results.

Summary

Every person has a particular style of communication, that is, a way of communicating. Posture, gesture, facial expression, voice inflection, the sequence of ideas, rhythm and other tendencies tend to define the style. A person's style is a pervasive part of his behavior and affects his interactions with other persons. Whether groups of people, social, ethnic or national groups, similarily have a distinctive style is not known. This study attempted to discover if groups of students from Japan and America are characterized stylistically in some manner.

The results suggest that the American students are middle-grounders, not exceptional in any area compared to the others although they tend to be more apprehensive about speaking. The Japanese, while open, do not feel they are very orally capable, being shy, apprehensive, and reluctant to verbalize.

REFERENCES

BRUNEAU, Thomas, Satoshi Ishii, Ronald Cambra and Donald Klopf, "Communication Style: Guam College Students Compared to Those From Elsewhere," Communication Association of the Pacific paper, Agana, Guam, 1980.

CAMBRA, Ronald, Satoshi Ishii and Donald Klopf, "Four Studies of Japanese Speech Characteristics," Journal of the Chiba Prefectural Association of Senior High School English Teachers, 16 (March 1980), 31-36.

KLOPF, Donald and Ronald Cambra, "Communication Apprehension Among College Students in America, Australia, Japan and Korea," Journal of Psychology, 102 (1979) 27-31.

MORTENSEN, C. David, "A Report on the Construct of Speech Intensity," a Speech Communication Association convention paper, Chicago, 1972.

MORTENSEN, C. David, Robert Norton and Paul Arntson, Developing a Measure of Communication Intensity, unpublished research, University of Wisconsin, 1972.

NIE, N. H., C. H. Hull, J. G. Jenkins, K. Steinbrenner and D. H. Bent, SPSS: Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, 2nd ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1975).

NORTON, Robert, "Components of Communicator Style," Speech Communication Association convention paper, Chicago, 1974.

NORTON, Robert, "Foundation of a Communicator Style Construct," Human Communication Research, 4 (Winter 1978), 99-112.

NORTON, Robert and Larry Miller, "Dyadic Perception of Communicator Style," Communication Research, 2 (January 1975), 50-67.

NORTON, Robert and Loyd Pettegrew, "Communicator Style as an Effect Determinant of Attraction," Communication Research, 4 (July 1977), 257-282.

OKUDA, Kiyoshi, "Efficacy of Speaking," unpublished paper, International Christian University, 1975.